

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR ORGANIZED PUBLIC EVENTS AND GATHERINGS - STEP 3

Last Revised: October 15, 2021

This guidance document provides recommendations to help stop the spread of COVID-19 when organizing and/or attending an indoor or outdoor organized public event or gathering at Step 3 of the province's [Roadmap to Reopen](#) by following [Ontario Regulation 364/20: Rules for Areas in Step 3 and at the Roadmap Exit Step](#) (O. Reg. 364/20) under the [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#).

All businesses and organizations in the County of Simcoe and District of Muskoka must also adhere to Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit's (SMDHU) medical officer of health's [letter of instruction](#) (amended September 1, 2021).

The Ontario government requires **patrons** 12 years of age and older to be [fully vaccinated against COVID-19](#) and provide proof of vaccination (i.e., proof of identity **and** vaccine receipt or [enhanced COVID-19 vaccine certificate with QR code](#)) to access certain businesses and organizations, with limited exemptions. More information can be found in [O. Reg. 364/20](#), in the province's [guidance for businesses and organizations](#) and [question and answer](#) resource, on SMDHU's [website](#), and in the safety plan, screening and proof of vaccination sections, below.

An event or gathering is any occasion that involves a number of people in proximity to each other for an extended period of time. This includes weddings, receptions, concerts, festivals, conferences, and cultural and sporting events. Events or gatherings can contribute to the transmission of infections, including COVID-19. The province's [Roadmap to Reopen](#) has the following gathering limits for events and gatherings at Step 3:

Note: If the event or social gathering is held at a venue that is a place of business permitted to operate under the regulation, different capacity limits may apply as per Schedule 3 sections 4 and 5.

GATHERING LIMITS – AT STEP 3

	Gathering/Event	Religious Service, Wedding and Funerals
Indoor Capacity	Up to 25 people	<p>Ceremonies – limited to space sufficient to ensure physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) can be maintained.</p> <p>Ceremonies at private dwelling – up to 25 people.</p> <p>Dinner/reception – 25 people.</p>
Outdoor Capacity	Up to 100 people	<p>Ceremonies – limited to space sufficient to ensure physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) can be maintained.</p> <p>Dinner/reception – 100 people.</p>
Motor Vehicle	Drive in/drive-by concerts, theatres, and cinemas are permitted subject to conditions as prescribed under O. Reg. 364/20 .	<p>Conditions include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People must stay in their vehicles. • Each vehicle may only contain members of a single household plus a maximum of one additional person from outside that household who lives alone or is a caregiver for a member of the household. • Vehicles and non-motorized vehicles must be positioned at least 2 meters (6 feet) apart.

- People at their place of work, including performers and crews, **do not** count towards gathering limits, but vendors are included in these numbers.
- In all cases, individuals are required to continue to maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from people outside their household.

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR ORGANIZED PUBLIC EVENTS AND GATHERINGS - STEP 3

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZERS

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- If an outdoor area is covered by a roof, canopy, tent, awning, or other element - at least two full sides of the entire outdoor area must be open to the outdoors and must not be substantially blocked by any walls or other impermeable physical barriers.
- If an outdoor area at the business or place is equipped with a retractable roof and the roof is retracted, at least one full side of the outdoor area must be open to the outdoors and must not be substantially blocked by any walls or other impermeable physical barriers.
- Offer virtual or live-streamed activities.
- Advise attendees to complete a COVID-19 [self-assessment](#) before coming to the event and follow the direction provided. Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms should stay home, seek testing, and [self-isolate](#).
- All employees must be [actively screened](#) before attending the workplace and follow the direction provided.
- Be aware of the potential for inclement weather and develop a plan to accommodate attendees if severe weather suddenly arises (e.g., plan for a temporary safe indoor space while ensuring physical distancing and provide masks/face coverings for all attendees or cancelling the gathering/event if inclement weather is predicted or if the attendees cannot be safely moved indoors temporarily).
- Promote personal protective practices (e.g., face coverings, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, staying home if ill) by posting [signs](#).

SAFETY PLAN

- A [safety plan](#) must be written and available on request. A copy of the safety plan must be posted in a conspicuous location where it can be viewed by staff and patrons.
- The safety plan shall describe the implementation of public health measures in the location, including but not limited to, screening, proof of vaccination verification process (if applicable), physical distancing, masks/face coverings, cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces and objects, the wearing of personal protective equipment, and preventing and controlling crowding.
- Additional guidance on how to develop your safety plan can be found [here](#).

SCREENING AND RECORD KEEPING

- All staff must be [actively screened](#) before attending work. Staff are to conduct a COVID-19 [self-assessment](#) before attending work and follow the direction provided. If they have COVID-19 [symptoms](#), they should stay home, seek testing, and [self-isolate](#).
- All **patrons** 12 years of age and older must be [fully vaccinated against COVID-19](#) to participate in events held at facilities that are indoor meeting and event spaces, food establishments, concert venues, and theatres and cinemas, with limited exemptions as per [O. Reg. 364/20](#). See the proof of vaccination section, below, for more information.

PROOF OF VACCINATION

- Operators of indoor meeting and event spaces, food establishments, concert venues, and theatres and cinemas are required to check and verify proof of vaccination (i.e., proof of identity **and** vaccine receipt or [enhanced COVID-19 vaccine certificate with QR code](#)) of patrons 12 years of age and older at the point of entry, with limited exemptions.
- **NEW:** Effective October 13, 2021, **results of an antigen test establishing that the patron is negative for COVID-19 is no longer accepted instead of proof of vaccination** for purposes of attending a social gathering associated with a wedding service, rite or ceremony.
- For more information see the table, below and [O. Reg. 364/20](#).

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR ORGANIZED PUBLIC EVENTS AND GATHERINGS - STEP 3

Event	Location	Proof of Vaccination
Funerals		
Funeral services, rites or ceremonies	Any setting (including meeting or event spaces, places of worship, funeral establishments)	Not required
Social gatherings (e.g., receptions) associated with funeral service, rite or ceremony	Meeting or event spaces located in places of worship, funeral establishments, cemeteries, a crematorium and similar establishments	Not required
	Other meeting or event spaces (e.g., conference or conventions centres)	Required*
Weddings		
Wedding services, rites or ceremonies	Any setting (including meeting or event spaces, places of worship)	Not required
Social gatherings (e.g., receptions) associated with a wedding service, rite or ceremony	Any meeting or event spaces (including conference or conventions centres, places of worship)	Required*

*unless patron qualifies for an exemption

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- Plan to accommodate physical distancing by maintaining at least 2 metres (6 feet) distance between attendees from different households (e.g., taping off chairs, staggering tables). [Post signage](#) to remind attendees of this.
- Stagger arrivals and departures to avoid congregation of crowds on the initiation and conclusion of the event.
- Eliminate high-risk activities such as those that may result in physical contact between attendees outside of their household members.
- Persons waiting in line or congregating outside must also maintain at least 2 metres (6 feet) distance from every other person.

USE OF MASKS, FACE COVERINGS AND EYE PROTECTION

- Masks and [face coverings](#) are mandatory in all indoor public spaces and recommended outdoors when physical distancing is a challenge.
- Staff are required to wear a medical mask and approved eye protection when within 2 metres (6 feet) of someone who is not wearing a mask or face covering in a manner that covers that person's mouth, nose, and chin.
- More information on masks and face coverings can be found [here](#).

DANCING, SINGERS & MUSICAL PERFORMERS

- If live entertainment is performed for spectators, the performers must maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres from any spectators or be separated from any spectators by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier.

HAND AND RESPIRATORY HYGIENE

- Encourage all attendees to [wash their hands](#) with soap and water or [sanitize their hands](#) with alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60-90% alcohol content as they arrive and frequently during the event.

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR ORGANIZED PUBLIC EVENTS AND GATHERINGS - STEP 3

- Ensure hands are washed before and after handling food, after handling dirty utensils, using the bathroom, handling cash, etc. Gloves are to be replaced/changed at this time as well. Glove use does not replace handwashing.
- [Cough and sneeze](#) into your elbow or use single-use tissues followed by hand hygiene.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

- In addition to routine cleaning and disinfection, surfaces that are frequently touched with hands should be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary condition, as well as when visibly dirty.
 - Examples of frequently touched surfaces include, but are not limited to hand contact areas, door handles, switches, tabletops, chairs, sneeze guards, restrooms, taps, utensils and dispensers, credit card machines, baby change tables.
- Use only disinfectants with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) given and [approved by Health Canada](#). Ensure products are not expired and always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- It is recommended to maintain logs of cleaning and disinfecting.
- Limit the use of water fountains to be used only to re-fill water bottles, not for individuals to drink directly from them. Ensure they are cleaned and disinfected as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary condition.
- Dining tables are to be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary condition and between sittings.
- More guidance on cleaning and disinfection is provided by [Government of Canada](#) and [Public Health Ontario](#).
- While the risk of COVID-19 transmission through touching surfaces is low, it does occur. It is important to continue to follow infection control measures to reduce the various ways in which COVID-19 is spread. This includes appropriate cleaning and disinfection as well as proper hand hygiene, masking, physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, and immunization.

SIGNAGE

Post signs promoting wearing masks/face coverings, handwashing, capacity limits, proof of vaccination, and physical distancing and make them visible to staff and patrons. Sample signage can be found [here](#).

PUBLIC EVENTS AND SOCIAL GATHERINGS THAT SERVE FOOD

All special events that serve food require approval from the SMDHU. For more information regarding special events and applicable application forms, please visit <http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Topics/FoodSafety/SpecialEvents>. If meal service is provided follow these [best practices for food safety](#) and these guidelines for food service.

OTHER GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

It is recommended that operators also refer to SMDHU's guidance for [Public Washrooms](#).

SUPPORTING EACH OTHER AND OUR COMMUNITY

We understand that this is a challenging time, but public health measures like this are needed to limit the spread of COVID-19. We thank you for the service that you provide to the community.

Please contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit's Health Connection line if you have any questions at 1-877-721-7520, Monday to Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

While the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit aims to provide relevant and timely information, no guarantee can be given as to the accuracy or completeness of any information provided. This guidance is not intended to, nor does it provide legal advice and should not be relied upon or treated as legal advice. Users seeking legal advice should consult with a qualified legal professional. No one should act, or refrain from acting, based solely upon the materials provided in this guidance, any hypertext links or other general information without first seeking appropriate legal or other professional advice. Please visit the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit website regularly for updates and additional guidance.